Mongoose in the Viper's Nest

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Mongoose in the Viper's Nest

by Applebottomgenz

Summary

Continuation of the Little Dragon.

Chapter 1

Will fell silent against Hannibal's chest. His whole body sagged, the intensity he'd been holding fell away.

Hannibal grunted and stood with his precious bundle. His chest was throbbing but there was blood all over his darling's face. He could feel Will's hot blood seeping into his skin. It was a baptism of blood, and Hannibal let himself bath in it. It washed over him, tying him to the boy in his arms. He would give him nothing but complete adoration. Shower him in riches and cloth him in love.

But firstly he must attend to their wounds.

Will was burning up in his arms. The fever was ignited in his brain. The boy needed time to heal not only from the attack but the encephalitis raging war in his mind. Hannibal would give him time and peace. He placed Will upon the dining room table. An offering to whatever god saw them. An altar on which Hannibal would worship.

He slid a needle of sedatives into Will's arm. He murmured an apology at the needle, knowing his darling boy hated them. Then immediately he administered a large dose of painkillers. There was no need for Will to be in pain ever again. Even while he slept, the boy would be at peace.

The dragon had cut the boy's face, across his eyebrow, below his eye, and down his chin. The deepest was on the boy's cheek. It would need stitches, the rest could be bandaged. He went to prepare the sutures, but staggered. His head spun. He was dizzy from his own blood loss. He checked Will's breathing and pulse. It was strong and steady. He allowed himself to sit and peeled off his bloody shirt.

The bullet had struck him below his clavicle. It had passed cleanly through, missing his lung, but tearing apart his upper shoulder muscle. His left arm was nearly impossible to move without the muscle screaming pain. He cleaned the wound, pouring antiseptic over them. He then staunched the bleeding and began wrapping gauze. After binding it tightly, he took an adrenaline shot to keep awake.

He had much to do.

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The world was too bright and confusing.

Will kept his eyes closed and turned under the soft covers. He buried his face into the fluffy pillows and drew the covers tightly around him.

His shoulders and back ached and he knew he was due for his medicine. But he didn't want to get up, not until Hannibal was there and maybe not even then. As if on cue, Will heard the door open and Hannibal's light footsteps drawing near.

"Mylimasis?"

Will gave a half hearted groan and pulled a pillow over his head. He decided he didn't want to be bothered. Hannibal chuckled, "Darling, it's nearly noon. Let's get you up."

"Don't wanna," Will whined.

Hannibal sat beside him, the bed dipping at the extra body. He felt Hannibal caress his body, fingers rubbing gently down his sides, massaging his stiff arms. The blanket was pulled loose and the pillow removed. Will kept his face in the sheets, it was too bright all around. Hannibal kissed his rowdy hair and managed to get Will under his arms. He pulled him up from the covers, depositing the sleepy boy on his chest.

Will grumbled, "I don't wanna get up."

"You stayed in bed all of yesterday," Hannibal argued as he gently arranged Will's limbs around him. Once satisfied, Hannibal stood, Will's arms clung to his neck, face buried in his shoulder. Hannibal supported his bum, while Will's legs wrapped around the older man's waist.

Will was carried into the bathroom and placed on the counter. He knew Hannibal was babying him but he didn't really care. He had no energy or motivation to do anything. If Hannibal let him, he'd stay in bed all day every day.

It didn't help that he couldn't leave the house.

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It has been two weeks since they had killed the dragon together. Since they had bound themselves so tightly to one another, there was no telling where one ended and the other began. Hannibal had placed Will in a medicated coma so the boy could rest. Easing body and mind with unconscious dreams. The first week the boy had done nothing but sleep which allowed Hannibal to set to work.

With the scene in his living room, there was no doubt the dragon had been butchered. Despite any lawyers arguing, They'd both be incarcerated and Hannibal would lose Will, his everything. So Hannibal did not phone the FBI, who were out searching for Will in vain. He cleaned, and scrubbed, and burned all evidence of the Dragon. He disposed of the body, sunk the car, riped up the bloody carpets, and flooring and replaced the windows.

It meant the FBI would keep their claws away from Will, but it also made Will a prisoner. He was a missing person. Kidnapped. Criminal. Wanted by the FBI. He could not leave the house. From what Hannibal could make out, Will didn't seem to mind. After the Dragon and the medicated rest, he emerged solemn and regressive. He had little interest in talking or

moving. All the boy did was lie in bed slipping between crying and sleeping. Begging Hannibal to stay with him.

Even now perched on the bathroom counter, Will looked too fragile. Will rubbed his sleepy eyes before glaring reproachfully at Hannibal, "I don't want a bath."

Hannibal kiss his brow. Will still had a bandage from where the dragon had cut near his eye. It needed to be changed. They all needed to be changed, "Just a sponge bath and new bandages, my love. You'll feel much better after. Do you want some chocolate?"

Hannibal added the last question hoping to distract Will. It was low, but Hannibal would stoop lower if it meant Will was a little more happy. Will nodded his head in acquiescence and Hannibal produced the box of chocolates he had been hiding just for this moment.

Will began tasting the different chocolate treats and quickly became absorbed. Hannibal carefully worked. Removing Will's face bandages and cleaning the boys face and wound before placing a clean bandage on. He then moved to Will's back. He had kept Will in clean boxers, finding it easier to keep an eye on the injuries and monitor for infection. Will, again, didn't seem to mind, choosing to burrow under blankets then argue for clothes.

The wound on Will's back was healing, but a scar would remain. The word "Dragon" was carved in painful letters across his upper back. Will needed to see a specialist. It was possible the scars could be surgically removed or hidden, but Will was in hiding and Hannibal had little skills in plastic surgery. Besides, he hadn't spoken much to Will about the scars. The boy had refused to comment on them when asked. It was too soon. Too painful.

"Can I have my medicine?" Will asked as Hannibal finished his back. Hannibal wiped down the boy's chest and arms before answering.

"You should eat some food and then you can," Hannibal said. Will had also taken to not eating. A dangerous thing with his current weight.

"I had chocolates," Will whined pitifully. Hannibal glanced at the small box, Will had only managed to eat two of the eight candies.

Hannibal kissed his brow, "I'm proud of you Will, but you need to eat more or your stomach will get upset with the medicine."

Will's shoulders sagged and he looked so terribly sad, Hannibal immediately gave up on the full bath and scooped Will up. Will did not question Hannibal but merely latched on to him like before. Hannibal grabbed a blanket and Blue before exiting the room.

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Will's heart pounded, his anxiety rising as Hannibal carried him out of their room. Will wanted to yell at him to go back, that it wasn't safe anywhere else, but he couldn't speak. His fingernails dug into Hannibal's back.

A whine rose in his throat, all he wanted was to go back where it was safe.

Hannibal whispered encouragingly, "It's alright, you need a little fresh air out of the room."

"I wanna go to bed," Will cried as Hannibal placed him on the comfy chair in the kitchen. He pulled his legs up, curling inside himself.

"Food first, my darling," Hannibal gave him Blue which he snapped into his arms, then the weighted blanket was placed over him. The pressure was nice, it felt like Hannibal was over him, giving him a massive hug.

Will mumbled a thanks, but it came out as an unhappy grunt. Hannibal didn't seem to mind, he just smiled kindly at him and moved to the fridge. Will watched him carefully. Hannibal had been very dotting and considerate, but Will couldn't help but wonder when it would all end. When would Hannibal grow tired of him? When would the FBI come? Would he be going to Dr. Chilton's hospital? Would Hannibal visit him?

Hannibal returned with a glass and a straw. It was a pink colored drink.

"I need you to drink all of this," Hannibal said, "It has good nutrients for you."

Will wrinkled his nose but accepted the glass. He sipped a little because Hannibal was eyeing him. It tasted like berries. The thick smoothie that slid down his throat and lay heavy in his stomach. He immediately did not want to finish it. It made him feel sick. But he managed to get down enough of the smoothie for Hannibal to stop staring at his progress and go to the counter.

Will stopped drinking as soon as Hannibal turned away. He was tempted to throw the glass on the floor. That would show the older man how much he hated it. But Will didn't dare, too afraid of the distant shadow that had broken Will of any stupid behavior.

Hannibal returned with a plate of hot food. A pancake, toast, eggs, sausage, and a small bowl of oatmeal. Will stared in horror at all the food. Did Hannibal expect him to eat all of that?

"Just a few bites Will. You need something solid that's not sweets."

"I'm not hungry," Will said desperately. His stomach reeling at the sight and smell.

"You don't have to eat everything. Just three bites of something. You choose." Hannibal showed him the plate, each food was carefully separated.

"Toast," Will said finally. It looked the least revolting. Hannibal smiled and took the plate away. He came back with a smaller plate, the toast cute into pieces. Will would say they were larger than bit size pieces, but his bite size was just a nimble.

Still, Will didn't want to disappoint Hannibal, so he picked up the first piece and nimbled at it. It was good as pieces of toast that made his stomach want to turn could be. He didn't really understand why food was so revolting. He used to love any scrap he could get his hands on. Now he didn't want anything. He just wanted to wallow in bed and let the fog from the drugs take his mind.

Still he got the three pieces down because Hannibal would be upset if he didn't. Hannibal looked so happy, that Will managed a few more sips of the smoothie too, just to see Hannibal's eyes crinkle.

"Good boy," Hannibal praised. And Will smiled because he knew that meant he'd made Hannibal happy.

After it became obvious to Hannibal that Will wouldn't eat anymore. Hannibal offered his hand and Will managed to stand. Will clung to his hand. His legs were stiff from rest. He frowned at Hannibal, "What about my medicine?"

Hannibal looked guilty, "I left it upstairs, it'll be good to stretch your legs, yes?"

Will scowled. After his bedrest and Hannibal's babying. He found no reason why he had to walk. But he relented with a sigh, "Fine."

Will shuffled beside Hannibal to the stairs and then slowly up the flight. Wobbling and wincing at every step.

"You're doing a wonderful job, Will," Hannibal praised.

Will nodded panting, his body felt hot and sweaty from the exertion. When they reached the top of the stairs Hannibal made him drink some water before they headed to the bedroom. With the bed in sight, Will had a burst of energy as he limped quickly to the bed and crawled in. He reached out his hands for Blue who was still tucked under Hannibal's arm. The stuffed dog was placed in his hands. Will squeezed in hard, grounding himself in this reality where he was safe and loved.

Hannibal kissed his forehead, "Such a good boy, Will."

Will squirmed, he wanted the medicine. He wanted the drugs to fog his mind. He was impatient for the unconscious rest and sweet high the concoction gave him. He bit his lip and begged, "Hannibal, please, I want the medicine!"

Hannibal's mouth dipped into a little frown, which did nothing to ease Will's impatience. Hannibal sat beside him, his large hands covering Will's bony small ones.

"I'm going to get your medicine, but I think we should talk first."

Will's brow furrowed, "Talk about what?"

"Your recovery. How you're feeling."

Will squeezed Blue, he would rather not talk. He'd rather sleep, but he nodded anything to make Hannibal get the sweet sweet pills. Hannibal smiled encouragingly and gently stroked Will's curls. Will leaned into the touch.

"Can you tell me how you're feeling right now?"

"Tired. I wanna sleep," Will said quickly, hoping Hannibal would take the hint and go get the pills.

Hannibal just hummed, "Have you been sleeping ok?"

"With the medicine, yeah," Will mumbled.

"Do you feel safe here?"

Will bite his lip. The dragon was dead. Of course he was safe. He squeezed his eyes shut driving away all the endless possibilities that were lurking always at the edge of his mind. That Hannibal would abandon him. That the FBI would take him away. That he'd be put in prison. That he'd be raped and used again. That Hannibal would die. That he'd be alone again.

But he shook his head, trying to shake them away, "I–I don't know. I like it here– with you. I don't want you to leave."

"I'm not leaving, Will," Hannibal promised.

"I– I know. I–I'm just scared and tired," Will whimpered, neither was a lie.

Hannibal nodded thoughtfully, "I know Mylimasis, you need lots of rest and quiet–"

"And medicine!" Will blurted. He desperately wanted to slip away into peaceful nothing. Why was Hannibal insistent on talking? Why couldn't he just give him the pills and hold him until he slept?

Hannibal sighed and gently moved Will, settling the boy back on the fluffy pillows, "My love, you need to rest and heal."

"And medicine!" Will pouted petulantly.

"No, Will," Hannibal said gently.

Will felt stricken, his throat seemed to constrict and his heart beat wildly. He sputtered, "Nu– No! No!"

Hannibal placed a calming hand on the boy's chest. His breath was ragged but he didn't struggle.

"Will, do you know what an addiction is?"

Will snarled. He knew addiction, he had seen it, felt it when he lived with his father. His father was an alcoholic. He had needed to drink and drown out Will and their problems. His father wouldn't stop.

"You do know what it is," Hannibal surmised, his eyebrow lifted at Will's anger, "So you know it's dangerous."

"I'm not addicted!" Will retorted. Will was not addicted. His father had hurt him when he was drunk. Will hadn't hurt anyone while using the medicine. It just helped him sleep! He just wanted to feel good for a few hours.

"You are not, my love," Hannibal soothed, "But the medicine has addictive qualities."

Will shook his obstinately, "No, it's medicine. It's good."

"It's a drug."

Will flinched at the word. He knew Hannibal used that word purposely to scare him. To draw on painful memories. It unfortunately had a powerful influence. And Hannibal knew it, "I think we should cut your dosage."

"No!" Will shouted. He pushed the thoughts of drugs and needles away, "I need it! It hurts!"

"How much does it hurt?" Hannibal asked patiently.

“Too much!”

"One to ten, one no pain, ten the most."

"Ten!" Will shouted angrily.

Hannibal shook his head, looking disappointed, "No, Will."

"It's ten! It is! I need the medicine! Please Hannibal! Please, it hurts too much!" Will broke into sobs. He was smarter than this. Why did he have to react so stupidly? He should have something like six or seven, make Hannibal pity him, make him believe him. He was so stupid and he just wanted to sleep.

Hannibal took him into his arms, letting him cry on his chest. Will kept begging, wanting to go into the dreamless fog.

"Please Hannibal– I was good. I ate food. You said I could if I ate. It's not fair! I ate!"

"Will, you're still going to get the medicine, but not as much. I don't want you to use them like that."

"Like what?" Will snarled. Will pushed away from Hannibal, his crying turned angry.

"You're not using them for your injuries," Hannibal said simply.

"I am! I am! I need them! I need them!" Will screamed. His hands had migrated to his arms and he sunk his nails into his skin. He broke the skin.

Hannibal arrested his wrists and Will screamed and twisted in his hold, "NO! LET GO! I WANT THEM!"

Hannibal let go and Will curled in a ball crying, and hitting his hands on the soft bed covers. But he did not claw his arms. Hannibal would stop him then. Will knew Hannibal hated when he hurt himself. But he was frustrated and angry and he wanted to hurt something. So he lashed out.

He hit Hannibal as hard as he could, yelling "I hate you!" in the man's face.

"Will–"

"I hate you!" Will beat his fists against Hannibal. He hated the way the man didn't react, and didn't hit him back. It made him all the more angry and upset, he kept hitting and punching until he collapsed crying again.

He knew distantly that Hannibal had stood up and returned again when the bed dipped once more.

"Mylimasis," Hannibal's hand ghosted over Will's shoulder. Will shrunk, but managed to blink up at the man. Hannibal had a glass of water. A single pill sat in his palm. He usually got at least two. He wanted more, but Will was exhausted. His anger pummeled out on Hannibal. He accepted the pill and drank the water without a word.

Hannibal stayed with him until the fog came.

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The next time he woke, Hannibal was at his side brushing his fingers through his damp hair.

“Mylimasis, you must bathe.”

Will groaned and rolled over. He pressed his tired face into Hannibal’s thigh. His hands clutched at the man’s pant leg, “I don’t wanna.”

“I need to change your bandages or you’ll get an infection. You need to be clean and healthy.” Hannibal’s soft voice reasoned.

“Can I have medicine afterwards?” Will asked, hopeful for the blissful feeling of nothing.

“You’ll have to eat, but then you may have a small dose,” He consigned with a sign.

Will smirked into Hannibal’s thigh, feeling much better that his manipulation had worked. Hannibal helped him sit him up and wrapped his arms around his shoulders when he lifted him to the bathroom.

The room was warm and when Hannibal placed him on the counter he noted that warm steamy water was already awaiting him in the tub. He frowned a bit, not liking how the water

would jolt him awake. How his mind would be more alive and he'd be forced to think about what happened. What was happening. What was to happen.

Hannibal's fingers were gently peeling the bindings away, and an antiseptic tissue was patting his wounds clean. Will hissed at the sting.

"Almost done," Hannibal assured. And it was. Hannibal lifted his shirt and removed his own shirt from Will's pale and shivering torso. Will refused his own clothing, only wanting to wear Hannibal's clothes. It felt safer that way.

Hannibal hand guided him to stand, and Will did so clutching the man's bicep to steady his balance. He felt sore all over and ached. He wanted to lay back down.

Unfortunately bath time was an inevitable force when Hannibal orchestrated it. Will was led to the edge of the tub where Hannibal helped him step out of his boxers and into the warm water. It wasn't as jolting as Will remembered. He let himself sink down and sit in the warm waters. Hannibal hummed his approval.

"Good, Will. Now would you like me to wash you?" Hannibal asked, already kneeling beside the tub.

Will nodded. He didn't feel like speaking today. Hannibal began to wash him with the softest feeling sponge, allowing the warm water to run down his skin instead of scrubbing the dirt away. Will liked the feeling. He would have liked to lay against the tub and rest his head on Hannibal shoulder, perhaps slip into a dreamless sleep, but the wounds on his back would flare if he did that. So he tucked his chin to his chest and attempted to sleep hunched forward.

Hannibal kept him from slipping in the water, a possessive hand rubbing circles on his chest and supporting his body from toppling over. Will disassociated from his body for a while, pretending to play with Winston and Buster and Blue in his mind.

They were all nestled together in Hannibal's bed. Blue and Winston cuddled near him while, Buster, always the more energetic in Will's dreams, scampered around the bed. Will threw a knife and Buster would fetch it. It was pleasant and Will chuckled each time the little dog jumped over the covers and tumbled over the many pillows.

He threw the knife once more, but this time Buster retrieved it, the blade had split the dog's skin near its mouth. Will shrieked and grabbed the knife from the dog's mouth. But as he pulled the knife free, blood gushed from the dog's mouth and the little animal collapsed. He dropped the knife as if it burned him, his hands covered in blood.

Will shrieked and gathered the dog in his arms. He couldn't speak. All he could do was scream. The dog's head sagged in his arms and he saw the knife had punctured its jugular. Will screamed and shook the dog, willing him to wake up. But Buster was dead. He kept screaming until he couldn't breathe and darkness flooded his mind.

*

Hannibal sedated Will after he couldn't get the boy to stop screaming and thrashing.

All had been calm. Will had let his mind drift while Hannibal washed him. He had been half way done rinsing the boy's hair when Will had stiffened in his arms. Then the guttural screams started. Hannibal had called to him, trying to get him to stop. Arms and legs flailing wildly, Hannibal had pulled him from the tub.

Will fought him, screaming and clawing viciously with nails. Hannibal managed to get him into the bedroom, where he wouldn't be in danger of cracking his bones against a counter or tub.

He grabbed his emergency tranquilizer from his medical bag and pressed the needle to the boy's neck before he could harm himself more. Will collapsed, and Hannibal arranged his limps into a comfortable position, leaning the boy on his side.

"Oh, my darling," He muttered, petting his love's hair. He kissed Will's brow, "Sleep, love, I won't leave."

Chapter 2

“How are you Hannibal?”

“Worried.”

There was a pause over the phone and Hannibal could hear Alana’s thoughts ticking.

“You know there's nothing you could have done.”

He closed the door to the guest room. Will was sleeping soundly in the master and he didn't want to risk waking him. Will had flinted between sleep and crying for the past day. Nothing seemed to comfort him. He needed to do something, to take Will away so he could heal properly, but he couldn't, not when the FBI was watching his home for signs of Will returning.

“There's a great many things I could have done, Alana,” He said with a sigh, thinking of how he should have left with Will a long time ago. “Yet here we are. Now my only regret is that I won't be able to see Will again.”

“Don't give up hope. If he manages to escape Dolarhyde, you know he'd come back to you. He trusts you. We just have to hope he can get away.”

Away indeed.

“Has there been any developments in the case?”

“They got a hit on the car, but it disappeared again. Has the watch been OK?”

Hannibal glanced out the window, there was a black car on the sidewalk. In the heat of Will's disappearance, the FBI trail had been sent out to search. They had missed the Dragon's attack on the house. They had also, thankfully, missed Will.

“They are a bit of a pest but necessary. They might spot Will before I do. I can't keep my eyes on everything.”

It had been a frantic time after the attack. Hannibal had rid the place of any blood or DNA the FBI might find. He had driven the car and body into a lake, but not without drawing some of the Dragon’s blood, his DNA may come in handy down the line.

He carefully hid unconscious Will in his secret basement, the medicated coma had kept him safe, and more importantly *quiet* . He then threw a rock through the already half shattered window. If anyone had walked by they would have seen the bullet splintered window. He had to control the message.

The morning later, he “discovered” the broken window and called the FBI, they had been there since. The excuse of a possible attack by Dolarhyde. Hannibal had assured them it was

likely just rowdy kids, but the FBI, to Hannibal's displeasure, was being cautious.

"I'm worried about you. You should get out of there for a while."

"And what if Will returns?"

"Then the FBI will be there. They're watching the house, not you."

"It seems like a betrayal to leave," Hannibal answered honestly. He glanced towards the door, where he knew Will rested just a ways away. He could barely stand being this far away.

"It's not," Alana assured, "Will would want you to. He's probably hoping and praying you're searching for him this very minute. Why don't you help the cause? For WIll's sake."

"I'm not sure Jack is keen on my return."

"Jack's invited us back in. You are back if you want in."

"Has he finally calmed?" Hannibal asked bitterly, remembering Crawford's cold words when Will went missing.

"Hannibal, you can't blame him for taking you off the team. You were too close," Alana defended then paused, "He knows he needs a profile. You were the closest to Will, Will the closest to Dolarhyde. You'd be the best person to make the profile."

"I see," Hannibal murmured, half angry, half impressed with the agent. "And when does dear Jack need me?"

"Anytime you're free. I think he even said something about coming over if it came to that."

"A desperate time. Well, seeing as I do need to get out of the house. I'll arrange a time with him."

"Thank you, Hannibal," He could hear her smile, "You're giving Will a fighting chance."

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Will opened his eyes. There was the comforting figure of Hannibal. He smiled at him, "Hannibal?"

The older man leaned down and kissed Will's brow. Will wrapped his arms around Hannibal's neck and pulled the bigger man on top of him. He loved the feeling of Hannibal on top of him. The weight keeping him grounded and safe. Will nuzzled into the man's neck, his body brushing against the rough tweed jacket. His heart beat increased: he knew that fabric, knew the coat, knew it meant Hannibal was going out.

"Are you leaving?," Will asked pitifully. Hannibal tensed above him and Will knew that did not bode well for him, "You can't go!"

“Will, my love,” Hannibal kissed his head. “Don’t worry your precious mind. I’m going out just for a little while. I’ll be right back, alright?”

The terror of being alone creeped upon him. Afraid Hannibal would never come back. Afraid that the dragon would come and take him. Afraid he would accidentally kill again. He felt tears building in his eyes, “No, stay with me please. Please Hannibal, I’m a good boy. Please.”

Hannibal gathered him in his arms, holding him closely, “You’re such a good boy. I’m going to give you some medicine, for being so good.”

Will pouted, “You just want me to sleep.”

Hannibal didn’t deny it, “If you sleep, you won’t worry. And when you wake up, I’ll be home and we can cuddle here. Would you like that?”

“I want you to stay with me now and not leave.”

“Here,” Hannibal bargained, “You take the medicine, and I will stay with you until you fall asleep. Alright?”

Hannibal held up his palm of the two little blue pills. Will studied them. He wanted to take the medicine anyway. Despite Hannibal limiting his use, Will still craved the fog they offered. It was too easy to pop them in his mouth and swallow them down.

“Good boy,” Hannibal praised.

Will smiled and snuggled closer. He tried not to think about Hanniba getting up and leaving. He clutched Hannibal’s jacket in his fists. He wouldn’t let him slip away, at least not while he was awake.

But slowly the fog came, and Will drifted. Hands loosened their hold, until Hannibal laid him back in the bed. Peacefully unconscious to the world and the sound of the door closing as Hannibal left.

*

“Dr. Lecter,” Crawford reached out his hand, Hannibal shook it with a slight frown. He was still seriously displeased with the agent, even if his actions had led to Will being tucked safely and secretly away in his home.

Jack read the thought immediately, likely feeling guilty for his part in Will’s disappearance, “I’m sorry for having to call you in like this. I know Will was special to you.”

Special, did not do justice in summarizing his affections for Will. But Hannibal covered his emotions in cold indifference, “Let’s not think on the past, I only want to know what you have on his whereabouts.”

Jack acquiesced with a curt nod and gestured to a white board. Beverly was there just adjusting a photo on the board. It was of Will, his angelic high school photo with his sad

eyes. Beverly stood back from the board, arms crossed. She looked upset and, staring at Will's photo, apologetic. Hannibal ignored her, focusing on the board.

"This is the information we've gathered from Will's disappearance," Jack explained, "We've got a snippet of Dolarhyde loading him into a vehicle. And we have a partial plate from a CTV, but we managed to get the whole listing.There's an APB on the car in almost 20 states and rising. If we get a hit on it we'll know. Nobody wants Dolarhyde taking up residence in their home state."

"He's likely changed cars." Hannibal observed, stepping closer to the angel pinned on the board. He let his gaze linger on Will's unmarred child face.

"You're right, but if we can find his car, we can find the direction he went in." Beverly murmured. She seemed intent on not making his eye contact, a frown marking her face.

"Agent Katz, how are you?" Hannibal asked politely.

"I'm angry Hannibal," Beverly stated honestly, "Alana told me there was an option to put Will in the hospital. Why didn't you let them take him? He would have been safe."

He felt annoyed at her obsession over Will. Only he had that right. Though, if Will had really disappeared with the dragon, Hannibal would have regretted not allowing Will's imprisonment. Knowing where Will was was of the upmost importance.

"Will did not deserve to be placed in that institute for the criminally insane. He was not insane. *Is* not insane. Nor was he a criminal. Despite the situation, he did not deserve to be locked away." He tried to look empathetic, channeling his dear Will. "But I do regret it now. He would have been safe from the dragon at least."

Beverly looked skeptical, but she turned back to the office's table to pull files. Jack watched their interaction closely.

"The loss of Will was a monumental blow, but having Dolarhyde slip through our fingers was worse," Crawford summarized, "He is the serial killer, I think we can all see Will was his

captive partner, though he never participated in the Dragon's hunts. Catching Dolarhyde is the most important initiative for this team."

"Dolarhyde will kill again, with or without Will. He has to kill on a full moon." Beverly added stiffly.

"When is the next moon?" Hannibal wondered out loud though he already knew the exact date. He had a plan to lead the FBI on a long and clumsy goose chase.

"Three days." Beverly said soberly.

"All the more reason to be ahead of him," Jack gestured to awaiting files, "Dr. Lecter, I have a preliminary profile, would you add to it?"

Hannibal nodded, "Of course. I'll get these back to you tomorrow."

*

Will was just stirring when Hannibal opened their bedroom door. Will must have tossed and turned while he slept, because the blankets were in a disarray, with the majority kicked off the bed along with a few pillows. Will was curled with a single pillow tucked to his chest and damp sheets beneath him. The poor boy must have sweated right through the sheets. He was glad he had gotten a mattress protector, his boy could sweat his weight in water.

Will blinked sleepily up at him as he replaced one of the kicked pillows from the floor to the bed. "Hannibal?"

"Hello darling, did you have a good nap?" He slid into the bed, sitting at the headboard so he could look at his boy.

Will yawned and crawled into the awaiting lap, resting his head against Hannibal's shoulder. The older man immediately cradled him, careful to not hold him where the bandages lay.

“You were gone forever,” Will pouted.

“I was gone barely two hours, darling. Did you wake up at all?”

“I don't know. I thought you came back for a little while, but must have been dreaming. I had a bad dream.”

Hannibal worriedly surveyed Will's sweat damp wrappings. Had he been hallucinating? Was the fever not breaking? The bandages needed changing and Will needed a bath, but Will’s mental state came first.

“What did you dream about?”

“The dragon. He wanted me to kill you. And I–I did it.” Will sniffled quietly into the tweed jacket.

Hannibal hushed him quickly, “You know those dreams are false. Your mind is just playing tricks on you. Can you do your exercises for me, please?”

Will sighed, but repeated dutifully, “I'm Will Graham. I'm nineteen years old, and I'm in your bedroom with you.”

“Good boy,” Hannibal praised.

“I don't know the time,” Will fretted.

Hannibal checked his watch, “It's about four in the afternoon.”

“Four,” Will repeated.

“Do you feel more grounded?”

“A little,” Will answered honestly, nervously chewing at his lip.

“Tell me three things you can see.” Hannibal prompted.

Will smiled blinking up at him, “I see you.”

Hannibal smiled back, “And?”

The boy looked around, “eh, I see the room and my glass of water on the table.”

“Good boy, Will. Now three things you can hear.”

“I can hear you, and I can hear me,” the boy looked quite triumphant at that, Hannibal nodded encouragingly. Will closed his eyes, focusing, “And I think I can hear cars outside.”

“Yes, after work traffic is just beginning. Now, what are three things you smell?”

“I smell you, you put on your fancy after shave before you went out,” Will wrinkled his nose as if the smell offended him.

“You don't like it?” Hannibal said in mock shock.

Will buried his head into the older man's shirt, “Doesn't smell like you.”

Hannibal chuckled, petting Will's hair, “I'll be sure to wash it off as soon as I can. Now what else?”

“I smell the blankets and… uh, me. I smell gross.”

“You do need a bath.” Hannibal agreed. His boy reeked of sweat. He could also smell the terribly sweet tinge of encephalitis. It was fainter than before, but still clung to his boy.

“Now ask me what I feel!” Will demanded, saddling Hannibal’s waist and looking the petulant boy Hannibal adored.

“Three things you can feel or touch.” Hannibal said with a smile.

“I feel the sheets, they’re the softest sheets I've ever slept on,” Will answered immediately. His boy loved swaddling himself in the clean linens.

“Very good,” Hannibal said as he gingerly touched the bandage upon Will's brow, it was damp and sagging.

Will flinched at the touch, “I feel the stupid band aids.”

“They're not band aids, William. It's gauze and tape.”

“William?” He repeated, “Nobody's called me William in a long time,” Will said curiously, which gave Hannibal the opportunity to remove the bandage without too much fuss from his charge.

“Do you like the name?” Hannibal asked, surveying the wound for infection. It seemed decently clean and healing without much of a scab. It could use some antibiotic cream and

another bandage though.

“You have too many nicknames for me,” Will pouted.

“I do, darling, do you like them all?”

Will nodded shyly, but then his brow furrowed, “But I don't have anything to call you.”

“You don't have to call me anything, Hannibal is perfectly alright,” Hannibal soothed, his thumb brushing Will’s brow, hoping to clear the worry lines the boy had developed.

“If I did have a nickname for you, could I call you it? You wouldn't get angry?” Will asked nervously.

“Of course I wouldn't be angry. You can always ask me if you're worried.” Hannibal said smoothly.

Will blushed and hid his face against the rough tweed shoulder, “Third thing I feel is you. I don't like your jacket.”

Hannibal chuckled, Will was an expert at avoiding questions and topics he did not like. He made a mental note to encourage the boy to speak more freely. “I will take the jacket off once you are in the bath. How does that sound?”

Will rolled his eyes, but then got a mischievous glint in his eyes. He leaned up and kissed Hannibal, “I want to say three things I can taste first.”

The boy licked a long strip on Hannibal’s chin, looking very pleased and ornery.

“You may do that at dinner time, William,” Hannibal carefully detangled himself from Will’s limbs and lips and stood. He held out a hand to Will, “Bath time first.”

Will pouted, “I don't want to!”

“You said yourself you smell. You'll feel much better after a bath.”

“You’re being mean daddy!”

The name slipped out like the boy hadn’t meant to say it. As soon as he had said it, Will went bright red and ducked back to the bed, scrambling to bury his head in the nearest pillow. Hannibal stared at the flushed boy, not quite believing his ears. Will had just called him daddy which sent his mind spirally in several directions all leading to Will panting and moaning ‘daddy’ while in his arms. However, the blush traveling down Will's chest was enough to break him from any thought. He returned to the bed, hovering over Will, who held a pillow over his own face in embarrassment.

“William, daddy would like to talk to you,” Hannibal said seriously. Quivering, Will slowly inched the pillow down until just his eyes poked above. The older man brushed the tangled curls away from the large blue eyes, “Are you alright Will?”

“Are you angry?” Will blurted, muffled slightly from under the pillow.

“No, I am not angry,” Hannibal promised.

The pillow was inched down more until he could see all of Will’s bruised cherub face, “I’m sorry. I won’t say that again.”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, “Why not?”

“It’s stupid. You don’t want to be called that.”

Hannibal covered the boy, leaning down until they were nose to nose, “What makes you think that?”

Will’s breath caught and his eyes fluttered, “Y–You like it?”

Hannibal kissed the slightly trembling lips, “Of course.”

Will gasped, and then soared up to crash their lips together once more. Will was fighting to pull Hannibal as close as possible while attempting to pull the man’s clothes off. Hannibal maintained control, carefully arresting each of his boy’s wrists until they were pinned on either side of Will’s face, all the while he kissed those reddened panting lips. He let himself take moment, apart, to appreciate Will’s flushed face. Will looked more awake and happy then he had in a long time.

“Daddy!” Will begged, squirming to get free.

Hannibal groaned at the name. He returned to Will’s lips.

“Daddy’s got you, Will,” He whispered.

Will's face went an even more rosey shade of red, and he moaned, “Stay here.”

Hannibal chuckled and gave Will a final kiss, “You’ll stay with me. But you’re getting a bath.”

“I don’t want to,” Will argued, but he clung to Hannibal as the older man pulled him from the bed.

“You’re being such a good boy, Will. We will cuddle and eat dinner after your bath,” Hannibal promised.

Will made a content sigh against his shoulder, “And you’ll give me medicine after too?”

“If you eat enough food, yes,” Hannibal agreed.

“Ok, daddy,” Will pressed kisses to his protector’s neck.

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